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Too Much Bobbie

Helen Morrison Howie



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THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA

Too Much Bobbie

A Farce in One Act

By

HELEN MORRISON HOWIE

*Author of "After the Matinée," "Those
Dreadful Drews," etc.*



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Too Much Bobbie

CHARACTERS

MISS BERTHA KENT	<i>spinster</i>
RITA	}	<i>her nieces</i>
ALICE		
MRS. MARY GRIFFIN	<i>her cousin</i>
NANCY BROWER	<i>Rita's chum</i>
SOPHIE	<i>a maid</i>

TIME OF PLAYING :—Twenty-five minutes.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Two lively sisters, Rita and Alice, have lost their dog, Bobbie, that they have smuggled into their aunt's house. Rita goes out to find it. A friend, Nancy, brings a dog for a present and hides it when warned that Aunt Bertha hates dogs. The aunt, finding Rita away and overhearing talk about Bobbie, concludes that Rita has eloped with a young man, Bobbie Basset. The excitement is high, when Rita, who has failed to find her dog, comes back discouraged. Nancy's present turns out to be the lost Bobbie. Aunt Bertha, glad it is no worse, has a change of heart about keeping Bobbie, and all ends merrily.

COSTUMES, ETC.

MISS KENT. Forty. Appears in simple morning dress. Changes to black broadcloth walking suit and hat. A tall, thin woman with vinegar expression, domineering and fault-finding.

RITA. Seventeen. Attractive street costume, light in weight and color.

ALICE. Nineteen. Trim shirt-waist and skirt.

MRS. GRIFFIN. Thirty-five. Rich, black traveling costume, suitable for a widow in second mourning. A wholesome looking woman, with a shrewd, kindly face, fearless and outspoken.

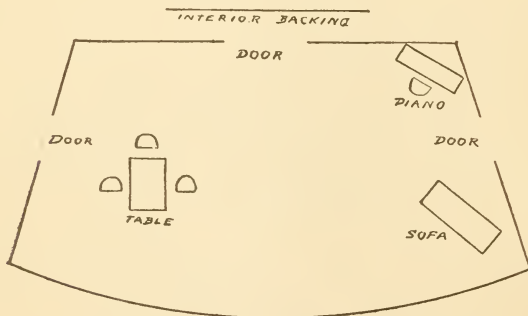
NANCY. Seventeen. Pretty hat and walking dress.

SOPHIE. Twenty. Black dress with white apron.

PROPERTIES

Sheets of music, newspaper, magazine, telegram blank, small dog basket, small silver card-tray, larger tea-tray with cups, etc.

SCENE PLOT



SCENE.—Living-room in Miss Kent's house.

Too Much Bobbie

SCENE.—*Tastefully furnished interior. Doors R. and L. and an entrance portière C. Table R. C., with telephone, books, magazines, etc. Piano upper L.*

(*At rise of curtain ALICE is down L. Enter RITA, R.*)

ALICE. Well, here you are at last !

RITA (*pausing and holding up her finger*). Hark !

ALICE (*listening*). I didn't hear anything.

RITA. Wasn't that a bark ?

ALICE. No. You think everything from a sigh to a locomotive whistle is a dog's bark.

RITA. Well, he may be brought back any minute—poor little Bobbie.

ALICE. I hope not.

RITA. Why, Alice ! You know you think he's the cunningest thing. If I ever get him back ——

ALICE. You can't keep him.

RITA. Why not ?

ALICE. Aunt Bertha isn't going away, after all.

RITA (*frightened*). Oh ! Why not ?

ALICE. She has just heard that an old friend is coming to visit here, so her own trip is postponed.

RITA. Well, isn't—that—the—limit ? (*Throws herself into chair, R. C.*) Where is she now ?

ALICE. Aunt Bertha ? In the dining-room.

RITA. Has she finished her breakfast ?

ALICE. No, not yet.

RITA. When did she tell you ?

ALICE. Just now.

RITA. This is awkward, to say the least.

ALICE (*agreeing*). To say the least !

RITA. What are we going to do about it ?

ALICE. What are you going to do about it, you mean. You got us into this fix.

RITA (*with a slight frown, impatiently*). My dear Alice, you said that before.

ALICE. I'll probably say it again. Not that it will do any good.

RITA. When did talk ever do any good? That's what's the trouble in this house—too much talk. It's talk, talk, talk, from morning till night. Thank goodness, I'm a person of deeds.

ALICE. Yes, misdeeds. If Aunt Bertha knew that you had actually been hiding a dog in your room for the past week —

RITA (*interrupting*). There would be more talk. Just what I wish to avoid.

ALICE. I don't see how you are going to manage it. (*A slight pause.*) The house will be swarming soon with people who have found lost dogs. If only you hadn't advertised!

RITA (*snatching up her hat and putting it on*). If, if, if! If Aunt Bertha didn't hate dogs! And if I didn't love them! And if I hadn't bought Bobbie! And if you hadn't lost him!

ALICE (*indignantly*). I lost your dog!

RITA. Didn't you leave the front door open?

ALICE. Certainly not.

RITA. Well, somebody did. And my little darling got away. And, Alice, I believe you're wicked enough to be glad of it.

ALICE. Well, I confess I am tired of having my bedroom turned into a dog kennel and the bed full of dog-biscuit crumbs.

RITA. Don't exaggerate! And please don't talk about dog-biscuit. I can't stand it! I found one just a little while ago in the top bureau drawer and it set me off again. (*Puts her handkerchief to her eyes.*) Poor Bobbie! He was so little trouble! So quiet, so intelligent and affectionate! I wish Aunt Bertha took after him.

(*Voice without calls.*)

ALICE (*to RITA, warningly*). S-s-sh!

(*Hastily occupies herself with the music, arranging and sorting the sheets; RITA goes to door, L.*)

RITA (*dutifully*). Yes, Aunt Bertha. I'm just getting ready to go for my singing lesson. (*To ALICE, with a change of tone.*) Find my music roll, hurry up! (*Voice without.*) Yes, Aunt Bertha. (*To ALICE.*) Aunt Bertha wishes to know if you have seen this morning's paper anywhere about?

ALICE (*picking up a sheet of music she has dropped on the floor*). No. Tell her I will look for it.

RITA (*first making a dissenting motion to ALICE*). No, Aunt Bertha, Alice hasn't seen the newspaper (*advancing into the room and producing a newspaper that she has hidden on her person; with a change of tone, significantly*)—yet. Have you, Alice dear?

ALICE. My! You'll get it!

RITA (*mocking*). My! You'll get it! Hope I shall. That's what I advertised for. (*Turns the pages.*) Where is it? (*Reads.*) Marriages. Deaths. Found. Lost. Ah! (*ALICE looks over her shoulder; reads.*) Lost: A copy of Bergson's "Matter and Memory." (*Comments.*) Some absent-minded professor put that in. (*Reads.*) A pair of false teeth.

ALICE. How ridiculous!

RITA (*commenting*). A bite for somebody.

ALICE. Rita! I'm ashamed!

RITA. Here it is! (*Reads.*) . . . fox terrier . . . irregular triangular mark over the left eye. . . . Answers to the name of Bobbie. Reward, ten dollars.

ALICE. Ten dollars! Why, you paid only five for him!

RITA. I know. But I'm willing to pay double to get him back again. You see, I love him twice as much as I did at first.

ALICE (*dryly, with a touch of amusement*). I see. But how about the money? Have you got it?

RITA (*with some hesitation, though scarcely abashed*). N-no—not exactly. I was hoping that you —

ALICE (*interrupting*). There is nothing so deceitful as human hope.

RITA. Don't talk like a copy-book! Didn't you say we would have to offer a reward?

ALICE. A suitable reward, I said.

RITA (*expostulating*). Suitable! Do you realize that that dog is worth his weight in gold?

ALICE (*decidedly*). Not my gold.

(*She goes back to sorting the music. RITA seats herself on the settee, somewhat crestfallen.*)

RITA (*after a pause, accusingly*). You have no sisterly affection.

ALICE (*unperturbed*). For a dog? What next!

RITA (*unheeding*). And to-morrow my birthday too. (*Suddenly recollects.*) By the way—that reminds me. I'll have to 'phone and tell Nancy Brower that it's all off.

ALICE. Nancy Brower?

RITA. Yes. I haven't seen her for weeks, so I wrote and asked her to come over to-morrow and help us to eat the birthday cake.

ALICE (*with good-natured mockery*). So you are going to have a birthday party, are you?

RITA (*with a vicious jab at the sofa pillow*). Was! Put it in the past tense, please. I was going to have that and other things until you spoiled it all.

ALICE (*leaving the piano, mystified and indignant*). I spoiled it all?

RITA. Yes. Didn't you just tell me that the unexpected arrival of a friend from the West has decided Aunt Bertha not to take that little trip up state? What's that if not spoiling it all?

ALICE (*quietly*). There are compensations.

RITA. Complications, you mean.

ALICE (*unheeding*). In the shape of Mrs. Griffin.

RITA (*starting to her feet*). It isn't the Griffin that is coming! (ALICE *nods.*) Dear old Griffin! Why didn't you tell me! And why, oh why, didn't she delay that letter of hers just one post! Another hour and Aunt Bertha would have gone and — (Stops, listens.) Was that the bell?

ALICE. Yes. I think so. Gracious! I hope it isn't people with lost dogs.

RITA. Found dogs, you mean. No, I'm afraid it's too early. But I expect that the line will begin to form in about an hour. Then I advise you to take up your post near the front door.

ALICE. Rita, it's no use! We'll have to take Sophie into our confidence.

RITA. That stupid creature! Never! We might as well tell Aunt Bertha at once and be done with it.

ALICE. We! You, you mean.

RITA. My! What a row! I shudder to think of it.

(There is a troubled, thoughtful pause.)

ALICE. Still, perhaps it would be better. You can't possibly escape. Suppose you make a clean breast of it.

RITA *(putting on her jacket)*. Thanks. I prefer to turn my back on it. Where's my music roll?

ALICE. That's you! You are always getting us into trouble and leaving me to face it.

RITA. I like to share things with you.

ALICE. But what am I going to do? I can't —

RITA *(interrupting)*. Just stay here and keep your wits about you. More than likely we shan't have a single answer.

ALICE. Stay here? That's all very fine. But you know Aunt Bertha. She won't give me any peace. Ten to one she'll be wanting me to go out and get something for her.

RITA. Refuse.

ALICE. Refuse! I see you don't know Aunt Bertha!

RITA. Say you have a headache. Say you have taken a bichloride of mercury tablet. Anything, only stay in till I come back. I won't waste any time on my trills this morning. I'm in too deep water to linger on the high C's. Oh! Did you get that?

ALICE *(gloomily)*. I hope you'll be as funny an hour from now.

RITA. I won't. I'm saddest when I sing.

(Takes her music roll from the piano and prepares to leave the room, door c.)

ALICE *(going to her)*. Wait a minute. Suppose some one should come. What about the reward? You don't mean to —

(RITA, perceiving MISS BERTHA KENT, who enters L., with a telegram in her hand, gives ALICE a warning touch on the arm.)

Miss K. Alice, this is from Mrs. Griffin. She has changed her plans and gets here on the morning instead of the evening train. She is due in about fifteen minutes. I wish you would call a taxi and go down to meet her.

RITA (*interposing; eagerly*). Let me go, Aunt Bertha! I'll meet the Griffin. I've lots of time before my lesson. Alice doesn't wish to go out. She said so just a moment ago. (*Appeals to ALICE.*) Didn't you, Alice? (*Frantically motions to ALICE behind her aunt's back.*) She has a headache. Haven't you, Alice?

MISS K. A headache! Just what I've been expecting. It's a wonder you aren't both ill, the way that you have been keeping yourselves shut up in your room lately. I can't understand this passion for indoors that has suddenly seized you. Before I couldn't keep you in. Now I can't get you to go out. (*To ALICE.*) What you need is fresh air. This little trip to the station will do you good.

RITA (*as before*). But, Aunt Bertha, Alice is going —

MISS K. (*cutting her short, peremptorily*). To the depot. And you to your music lesson. But not in that silly summer-weight jacket. Is that a fit garment for this time of the year?

RITA. The day is warm. And I'm roasting.

MISS K. Of course you are! And you'll go out in the raw air and catch cold, and I'll have a case of pneumonia on my hands.

RITA. But the air isn't raw.

MISS K. Don't contradict me! The air is always raw in November. I've seen more Novembers than you, and I ought to know. (*RITA is about to speak.*) Now, not another word! That's what's the trouble in this house—too much argument—too much talk. It's talk, talk, talk, from morning till night! To a person of few words, like myself, there is nothing more trying. (*ALICE turns away; RITA smothers an exclamation in a fit of coughing.*) There you are! Coughing away! And yet you will actually argue with me when I ask you to put on sufficient clothing to protect you from the weather. (*With a shake of the head.*) Oh, dear! It certainly is discouraging. A weaker nature than mine would have given up the struggle long ago. But I'll fight on. After all, your mother was my sister. And I'll do my duty by you if it kills me.

RITA (*under her breath, with an expressive gesture*). If it kills us, you mean! (*Runs out c.*)

MISS K. (*to ALICE*). What did she say?

ALICE (*evading*). I—I didn't hear very well. Something about killing.

MISS K. (*with the air of a martyr*). Killing! That's just what you girls are doing to me with your ingratitude—killing me by inches. (*Puts her hand to her side.*) My poor heart is getting worse every day. (*Phone bell rings; to ALICE sharply.*) Well, what are you waiting for?

ALICE (*with a slight gasp*). Nothing.

(*Exit, L.*)

MISS K. (*at the 'phone*). Hello! (*Pause.*) Who is this? (*Pause.*) Talk a little louder, please, I can't hear you. (*Pause.*) For pity's sake, don't bellow. I'm not deaf! (*Pause.*) Did I do what? Did I advertise for a dog? I certainly did not! I hate, loathe and abominate the beasts! (*Pause.*) What's that? (*Pause.*) My good man, I don't care what you read in the newspaper. It's all wrong, I tell you. There wasn't any dog lost from here, because there never was a dog here and there never will be! Is that plain? (*Pause.*) I can't help that. You have the wrong place, that's all. (*Pause.*) There isn't any use losing your temper about it. All the dogs in the world aren't worth that. (*Pause; indignantly.*) Sir! (*Hangs up receiver.*) Impertinent creature! A dog, indeed! I'd like to see a dog in this house!

(*Enter SOPHIE, C.*)

SOPHIE. Mrs. Griffin.

(*Enter MRS. MARY GRIFFIN, C. Exit SOPHIE, C.*)

MISS K. Mary! Alice has just gone to the depot to meet you.

MRS. G. (*regretfully*). And I've missed her. I'm sorry. But, Bertha, you know I particularly requested you not to send any one to meet me. (*They embrace.*) How are you? I'm glad to find you up and about. I concluded from the tone of your last letter that if I didn't hurry I wouldn't get East in time for the funeral.

MISS K. (*hurt and reproachful*). You may joke. But it is only a question of time.

MRS. G. It is that with all of us, isn't it? (*Removes her coat and hat; places them on a chair.*) Where's Rita?

MISS K. Gone for her singing lesson. Oh! the trouble I have with that girl, and Alice, too, for that matter. You

don't know what it means to have two nieces thrust upon you.

(She indicates a chair for her guest, then seats herself.)

MRS. G. *(examining the room)*. No, I wish I did.

MISS K. It is over a year now. And how I have stood it is more than I know. It must be that the Lord has strengthened my back to the burden.

MRS. G. *(at the piano, turning over the music; lightly)*. At any rate, He gave you a good stiff neck. *(Turns from the piano.)* But there is one thing, Bertha, that the Lord didn't give you.

MISS K. *(suspiciously)*. Eh?

MRS. G. You don't mind my telling you?

(Seats herself opposite.)

MISS K. *(offended)*. Certainly not.

MRS. G. He didn't give you an understanding of young people. You are making a sad mess of this thing. Every one of your letters showed me that.

MISS K. *(coldly)*. Perhaps you think you could do better.

MRS. G. *(with imperturbable good humor)*. I'm sure of it. In fact, that's what I came on to tell you. I'd like to prove it to you. Will you let me?

MISS K. Prove it to me? How? What do you mean?

MRS. G. Let me have the girls—for a time at least. John left me more money than I know what to do with, and ——

MISS K. *(interrupting)*. Are you mad?

MRS. G. No. Only terribly lonely.

(Enter SOPHIE, C.)

MISS K. But I ——

MRS. G. *(interrupting)*. Don't answer hastily. Take time to think it over.

MISS K. *(to SOPHIE)*. Well?

SOPHIE. Please, ma'am, there's a woman at the door. She has a bunch of dogs with her. She says if you hand out the ten dollars you can have your pick.

MISS K. *(rising)*. Ten dollars! What ten dollars?

SOPHIE. I don't know. But she's waiting for it, and she won't go away. And the dogs are tracking the mud all about the place.

MISS K. This is outrageous! Tell that female that if she doesn't take her pests away instantly, I'll have every one of them shot or poisoned!

SOPHIE. Yes, ma'am. And please, ma'am, Mrs. Bassett is down-stairs and wishes to see you very particular.

MISS K. Mrs. Bassett! What can she possibly wish? Has she a dog with her, too?

SOPHIE. No, ma'am. Only her husband.

(MRS. G. *laughs*.)

MISS K. (*aggrieved*). I'm glad you can laugh, Mary.

MRS. G. What is it all about? Have you lost a dog?

MISS K. I—a dog!

MRS. G. Of course not. I forgot. Then what are they bringing them here for?

MISS K. That's what I should like to know.

MRS. G. Perhaps you have a practical joker in your neighborhood. Some one who is aware of your pet aversion, and ——

MISS K. (*interrupting*). Perhaps. I don't know. But if you will excuse me, I am going to find out. And when I do, it'll be no joke. Sophie, you will show Mrs. Griffin to her room.

(*Exit, C.* SOPHIE takes MRS. G.'s coat and hat.)

SOPHIE. This way, ma'am, if you please.

(*Exeunt, R.*)

(*Enter* NANCY BROWER, C. *She carries a basket of the type used to convey little dogs. She looks about somewhat timidly. After a moment's hesitation she places the basket on the chair at the end of the table; goes to door R., which she partly opens.*)

NANCY (*calling softly*). Rita. Are you there? (*A pause.*) Rita.

(*Enter* MRS. G., R.)

MRS. G. Rita isn't at home. Is there anything I can do for you?

NANCY (*retreating a step or two*). My! how you frightened me! I thought it was Miss Kent.

MRS. G. (*smiling*). I'm her cousin, Mrs. Griffin. Shall I call her?

NANCY (*hastily*). Not for the world! I wouldn't have come up at all if the maid hadn't told me that Rita was at home. I'm her chum, Nancy Brower.

MRS. G. And a very nice chum, I'm sure.

NANCY (*with a slight giggle, gratefully*). Oh! thank you so much. And to-morrow she is going to have a birthday party.

MRS. G. (*in some surprise*). A birthday party!

NANCY. Yes. And as I am going away and couldn't attend, I brought around her present. (*Looks in the direction of the basket.*) I'm afraid you won't think much of it. I don't myself. But it was the best I could do. Fortunately, when it comes to dogs, Rita isn't very particular.

MRS. G. (*in amused dismay*). You don't mean to say that you have brought her a dog!

NANCY. Yes. I see you don't think much of it as a present. I don't myself. But I didn't know what to get. And as I was standing in front of a store window trying to decide, an Italian came along with a dog in his arms which he offered to let me have "much a cheapa." (*Goes toward the basket.*) Would you like to see him? I have him here in a basket. The basket didn't come with him, of course. Mother let me have that.

MRS. G. (*stopping her*). No, no! Don't take him out. I'm sorry, but you must not leave him here. This is no place for a dog. Miss Kent doesn't like dogs. And to-day she is particularly sensitive on the subject.

NANCY (*with a look of dismay*). I never thought about that. (*Dejectedly.*) Though I might have known. Even some amiable people dislike dogs. (*A slight pause, during which they stand looking at each other.*) What am I going to do about it? I can't take him home. We leave for Boston this afternoon, and the house is going to be closed.

MRS. G. Perhaps you could find the man.

NANCY (*skeptically*). In the streets of New York? (*She sits disconsolately on the edge of a chair. A pause; voice without; NANCY jumps up in alarm.*) It isn't Miss Kent, is it?

MRS. G. (*listening; with a nod*). I think so.

NANCY. Oh !

MRS. G. We had better hide that dog.

NANCY (*snatching up the basket*). And me too, please. (*Looks around wildly.*) But where—where ?

MRS. G. (*opening door, R.*). Here ! Into my room. First door on the left.

(*She shuts the door, R., on NANCY, and is seated by the table turning over the leaves of a magazine when Miss K. enters, C.*)

MISS K. Well, if the day continues as it has begun, there will be some excitement here before bedtime.

MRS. G. (*with a glance in the direction of door R.*). I'm sure of it.

MISS K. Between dogs and Bobbie !

MRS. G. Bobbie ? Who's Bobbie ?

MISS K. (*sitting*). Mrs. Bassett's darling boy. She was in here just now weeping all over my new divan. He has run away from home.

MRS. G. (*repeating*). Run away ! Was there any reason for his leaving his home ?

MISS K. (*with grim humor*). I don't know of any, except that his parents live there.

MRS. G. Are you a friend of theirs ?

MISS K. No, indeed. I made that perfectly clear to them this morning.—Neighbors, whom I hardly know. And why they should bother me with their affairs is more than I can understand. (*Struck by a sudden thought.*) Unless it is that they suspect — (*Excited ; rises.*) Yes, yes, that must be it ! Mary !

MRS. G. (*going to her*). What's the matter ?

MISS K. (*with her hand on MRS. G.'s arm*). Perhaps a change would be beneficial for the girls. I was going to say no, but — (*Stops.*)

MRS. G. Something has made you change your mind ?

MISS K. Yes—Bobbie.

MRS. G. Bobbie !

MISS K. (*sinking into her chair*). Sit down and I'll tell you all about it. But first, please open that door (*indicating door R.*), and give me some air. I feel really quite faint. (*After a slight hesitation MRS. G. opens the door.*) After all my care and training to think that it should come to—Bobbie ! (*Sound of a smothered sneeze ; sitting up ; listen-*

ing.) What was that? It sounded like a sneeze. If I were asked I should say it came from the direction of your room.

MRS. G. (*uneasily*). Nonsense! Who is going to sneeze in my room when I'm not there?

MISS K. (*going toward door, R.*). It will do no harm to investigate.

MRS. G. (*intercepting*). Oh, yes, it will.

MISS K. It may be a burglar.

MRS. G. I'm positive it isn't.

MISS K. Very well. If any of your effects are missing don't blame me. (*Sits.*)

MRS. G. I won't. Now, tell me about Bobbie. (*Sits.*) What makes you connect his name with those of the girls? Has he been attentive to them—has he called?

MISS K. Called! I should like to see him!

MRS. G. Then how?

MISS K. (*interrupting*). How? How do girls do everything that you don't wish them to do?

MRS. G. But what have they done?

MISS K. They've been acting queerly—very queerly of late.

MRS. G. In what way?

MISS K. Oh, unusually quiet and keeping to themselves a great deal and starting and changing color when spoken to.

MRS. G. (*musings*). Those are the symptoms. Has Bobbie got them, too?

MISS K. I don't know anything about Bobbie.

MRS. G. I thought you knew everything about Bobbie.

MISS K. Except that his name has been constantly on their lips.

MRS. G. They have discussed him with you?

MISS K. With me!

MRS. G. (*hastily*). Oh, no, of course not. Then how do you know?

MISS K. I overheard them. It has been Bobbie, Bobbie, Bobbie, all the week. Yesterday I came in here and surprised Rita writing a note which she refused to show me. She declared it wasn't of any importance. But, of course, I didn't believe her. And she looked as though she had been crying. There is something underhand going on. Of that I am sure.

MRS. G. How did they get acquainted with this young man?

MISS K. I don't know. I believe they attended the same school.

MRS. G. (*after a slight thoughtful pause*). It can't be anything serious. Just a boy and girl flirtation.

MISS K. When a girl stoops to flirt with a boy, it is serious enough, I should say.

MRS. G. With whom would a girl flirt, if not with a boy? However, Bobbie is gone, and they will soon forget all about him.

(*Enter SOPHIE, C., with a card on a tray.*)

MISS K. Don't tell me that woman is back again?

SOPHIE. Oh, no, ma'am. (*Innocently.*) She wouldn't dare come back after what you said to her. But before she left, one of her dogs killed the next door gentleman's cat, and he says he is going to sue you—if not worse.

MISS K. Sue me! Why should he sue me? I didn't kill his cat. (*Takes the card.*) Though goodness knows, I've wanted to many a time. (*Looks at the card.*) Signorina Luca. Rita's singing teacher. (*To SOPHIE.*) Is Rita with her?

(*'Phone rings.*)

SOPHIE. No, ma'am.

MISS K. There it goes! More dogs! Mary, will you answer it? I can't trust myself.

(*MRS. G., with a slight amused laugh, goes to the 'phone.*)

(*Exeunt MISS K. and SOPHIE, C.*)

MRS. G. (*at the 'phone*). Hello! (*Pause.*) Is Mrs. Griffin here? Well, rather. (*Pause.*) Is that you, Alice? (*Pause.*) At the depot all this time! You poor child, what a shame! (*Pause.*) I should say so. And I'm dying to see you and hug you and mother you—you poor little aunt-ridden — What is that? (*Pause.*) You can't hear me? Perhaps it is just as well. (*Raises her voice.*) Hurry home! Can you hear that? (*Pause; with a laugh.*) Yes, indeed. Good-bye.

(*Hangs up receiver as NANCY peeps into the room, R.*)

NANCY. Has she gone?

MRS. G. Yes. (*NANCY enters.*) And, my dear young lady, I wish you had.

NANCY (*ruefully*). You don't wish it any more than I do. (*Goes to door, L.*). There's a back stair somewhere.

MRS. G. Where's the dog?

NANCY. He's asleep on your bed. He seems to be perfectly at home.

MRS. G. I should say so. (*Goes toward door, R.*)

NANCY. You had better not disturb him. He's quiet now.

MRS. G. If you can take him without disturbing him —

NANCY (*interrupting*). But I can't take him—I simply can't.

MRS. G. And I can't keep him—I simply can't. My dear child, if you knew —

(*Enter MISS K., c., in a state of the utmost agitation.*

NANCY, *finding escape impossible, sinks into a chair.*)

MISS K. Mary! They've gone!

MRS. G. Who? What?

MISS K. Rita and Bobbie. Eloped!

MRS. G. Eloped!

NANCY. Eloped!

MISS K. Nancy Brower! (*Takes her roughly by the shoulder.*) Where did you come from?

NANCY (*frightened*). I—I don't know.

MISS K. Are you a party to this deception? Did you know about Bobbie?

NANCY (*as before*). No, no—really! Who is Bobbie?

MISS K. (*going to the 'phone*). To think that this should happen after all my care!

(*MRS. G. stops her as she is about to take down receiver.*)

MRS. G. What are you going to do?

MISS K. Notify the police.

MRS. G. No, no. There may be some mistake. How do you know that they have eloped?

MISS K. How do I know? Rita not at the studio, as her teacher has just this moment informed me. Young Bassett not at home. The whole thing is perfectly clear.

MRS. G. It will have to be made clearer before I'm satisfied. And I advise you not to take any action in the matter until —

MISS K. (*interrupting*). Do you realize that while we are wasting time talking about it—they may be getting married.

NANCY. Married! Just think of it!

(*Enter ALICE, C.*)

ALICE (*who has overheard the last few words*). Who is getting married?

NANCY (*jumping up*). Here's Alice!

MRS. G. Perhaps she will be able to help us. (*Goes to ALICE.*) My dear, where is Rita?

MISS K. (*to ALICE*). If you have been a party to this wretched deception, confess it at once.

ALICE. What deception? Do you mean about Bobbie?

MISS K. (*turning to Mrs. G.*). There, you see! She knows.

ALICE (*bewildered*). What do I know? What are you talking about?

MISS K. About the elopement. They've gone—your sister and that wretched Bassett boy!

ALICE (*after standing for an instant in speechless amazement*). Gone! So that was why she was at the depot!

MISS K. At the depot!

MRS. G. The depot!

NANCY. Depot!

ALICE. Yes. As I came out of the telephone booth, she rushed across the waiting-room and disappeared in the direction of the train shed.

MISS K. What did I tell you! What did I tell you! Now we are probably too late!

(*Rushes wildly from the room, L.*)

ALICE (*amazed and incredulous*). Rita! Eloped!

NANCY (*who is beginning to enjoy the excitement*). Isn't it thrilling!

ALICE (*as before*). Without telling me!

MRS. G. It is possible that she has left a message. Perhaps in her room you may find —

NANCY (*interrupting*). A note. Yes. They always leave a note. You had better go and see. (*Exit ALICE, R.; 'phone rings.*) There! I shouldn't wonder if Miss Kent has notified the police. Perhaps that's the chief 'phoning for particulars.

MRS. G. (*at the 'phone*). Hello. (*Pause.*) Miss Nancy Brower.

NANCY (*somewhat apprehensively*). That's me—I. What do they want? I didn't have anything to do with it. I don't wish to get mixed up with the police. Tell them—won't you, please!

MRS. G. (*amused*). My dear child, don't be absurd. It isn't the police. It's your mother.

NANCY (*relieved*). Mother! I had forgotten I had a mother.

MRS. G. Come and talk to her.

(NANCY goes to the 'phone ; exit MRS. G., R.)

NANCY (*at the 'phone*). Hello, mother dear. (*Pause ; contritely.*) Yes. And I suppose I've made you lose the train and upset all your plans, but I couldn't help it. We have an elopement and ——— (*Pause.*) No, no, I haven't eloped. (*Pause.*) What's that you say? We aren't going? Oh, I'm so glad! (*Pause.*) I can't. In fact, I don't know myself. It's all sort of mixed up. You see everybody is so excited. (*Pause.*) Yes. And mother, will you look up my prettiest photograph? This is going to get into the newspapers. And I'll be named as the eloping couple's best friend. (*Pause.*) Luncheon. What's luncheon compared to an elopement? (*Pause.*) No, don't wait for me. Good-bye. (*Hangs up receiver as MRS. G., followed by ALICE, enters the room.*) Did you find anything?

MRS. G. (*with a shake of the head*). Nothing. (*To ALICE, who seems too stunned to think or act.*) My dear, you probably know more about your sister than any one else. You must help us to unravel this. (*Indicates chair for ALICE and seats herself near her.*) You say you don't believe she has gone?

ALICE. I can't believe it. Rita wouldn't do such a thing.

MRS. G. What do you know about—what's his name—Bobbie?

ALICE. He was Rita's pet, not mine. All I know is we kept him hidden in the house for a week, and ———

(NANCY gives a screech and falls back into a chair.)

MRS. G. (*scandalized*). My dear child! What are you saying?

ALICE. I know it was wrong, and that we oughtn't to have done it. But with an aunt like ours, what are you going to do? I begged Rita to give him up, but she wouldn't. She was just crazy about him.

(Enter MISS K. L., dressed for the street.)

MISS K. I have just talked to Mrs. Bassett. She says her son has been traced to Philadelphia.

MRS. G. Where are you going?

MISS K. I am going after him.

NANCY *(to herself)*. Poor Bobbie!

MRS. G. Bertha, I think you are making a mistake. If you take my advice, you will remain quietly at home.

ALICE *(who has risen; her voice shaking with indignation and excitement)*. Besides, you don't really know. Oh! The whole thing is outrageous!

MISS K. *(turning on her)*. Silence!

(ALICE sits by the table and buries her face in her hands; NANCY goes to her.)

NANCY *(consolingly)*. Don't, dear, don't! They'll come back again. Maybe they won't like Philadelphia.

MISS K. They certainly won't after I get there!

(Exit, C.)

MRS. G. *(following her)*. Wait a moment, Bertha. You are going to make a mess of this, just as sure as —

(Gives it up with a hopeless gesture.)

NANCY *(to ALICE, who is sobbing; distressed)*. Please don't! I love to cry myself, but I hate to see any one else doing it. *(Struck by a happy thought.)* Oh, wait a moment! I have a surprise for you. *(To MRS. G.)* Shall I?

(MRS. G. nods; NANCY runs out R. ALICE goes to MRS. G., who takes her in her arms.)

ALICE *(wiping her eyes)*. You don't believe it, do you?

MRS. G. No. I feel sure there must be some mistake.

(NANCY bursts into the room, R.)

NANCY. He's gone!

MRS. G. The dog?

NANCY. Yes—the dog.

ALICE (*astounded*). A dog! You too!

NANCY. Two! No—just one. A little bit of a—oh, look for him, won't you! (*Searches.*)

MRS. G. You left him in my room, you say?

NANCY. Yes.

MRS. G. He can't be far away.

(*Exit, R., followed by ALICE; NANCY continues her search; she is on her knees half under the table when RITA enters C.; she looks tired and discouraged.*)

RITA (*after surveying NANCY in puzzled amazement*). Nancy Brower! What under the sun are you doing?

NANCY (*scrambling to her feet*). Rita! So you didn't go to Philadelphia?

RITA (*removing her hat and coat*). No, I went quite a distance. But hardly as far as Philadelphia.

NANCY. What doing?

RITA. I was running after a man.

NANCY. Running after ——! Didn't he want to take you with him?

RITA (*sitting; dryly*). No, he didn't seem particularly anxious for my company.

NANCY (*indignantly*). The brute! (*After a slight pause, with a touch of disappointment.*) So it isn't an elopement after all!

RITA (*puzzled*). An elopement! (*Gives it up.*) Nancy, I'm afraid I'm too tired to appreciate a joke.

NANCY. A joke! If you had been here this morning, you wouldn't have thought it a joke. Do you know that at this very moment your Aunt Bertha is on her way to Philadelphia after you and Bobbie Bassett.

RITA (*now thoroughly aroused and indignant*). I! Eloped with Bobbie Bassett! Why, I hardly know the boy.

NANCY (*with a gasp*). You hardly know him! Rita! How can you say such a thing! After hiding him here for a whole week.

RITA. Hiding! Bobbie Bassett!

(*Puts her hand to her head.*)

(*Enter ALICE, R., followed by MRS. G.*)

NANCY. Yes. (*Runs to ALICE.*) Didn't she, Alice?

ALICE. What? (*Sees RITA.*) Rita! (*To MRS. G.; triumphantly.*) What did I tell you!

(*Is about to go to RITA, but NANCY detains her; MRS. G. embraces RITA.*)

NANCY. Answer me first.

ALICE. What?

NANCY. Didn't you say that Rita had been hiding that Bassett boy in the house for over a week?

ALICE (*amazed and shocked*). Never!

NANCY. What! You deny it?

ALICE. Absolutely.

NANCY (*putting her hand to her head*). Oh! (*Appeals to MRS. G.*) You heard it.

MRS. G. She was so nervous and excited that I doubt if she realized what she was saying.

ALICE (*to MRS. G.*). What did I say?

MRS. G. You said that you had kept Bobbie hidden in the house for over a week.

RITA. Well, so we did.

NANCY (*wide-eyed; throwing up her hands*). And just a moment ago they denied it!

ALICE (*indignant*). I said Bobbie. I didn't say Bobbie Bassett. There are other Bobbies beside Bobbie Bassett.

MRS. G. He seemed to be the only Bobbie in the world this morning.

NANCY. And the other Bobbie?

ALICE (*witheringly*). The other Bobbie is a dog.

MRS. G. (*relieved*). Oh!

NANCY (*weakly*). A dog! I might have known it.

RITA (*indignantly*). Do you think I would look at a man ——!

NANCY (*interrupting*). No—not when there was a dog around. I said as much to your aunt. (*Penitently.*) Forgive me—please. Both of you.

MRS. G. With your Aunt Bertha in the same house! What possessed you to do such a thing?

RITA. I don't know. I just wanted a dog, and I bought one. It was all my fault.

ALICE. We were going to tell, but we kept putting it off from day to day. Then we lost him.

RITA. Then I advertised. As Aunt Bertha expected to

be gone for several days, I thought it would be safe. Unfortunately, she changed her plans.

MRS. G. So it was you who advertised?

RITA. Did you have any answers?

MRS. G. Yes, and they are still coming.

ALICE (*to RITA*). There, you see! I told you what would happen! We'll never hear the last of this.

RITA (*with a touch of recklessness*). I don't care. If I could only get my dog again. To think that that man should have him!

MRS. G. Man?

NANCY. The man you were running after?

ALICE. Running after a man! And she said just a moment ago that she wouldn't look at a man.

RITA. Yes, I've been running after a man, but the man wasn't Bobbie Bassett, and before I go any further, I wish to know what all this elopement talk means. What began it?

ALICE (*at a loss*). I—I don't believe I know. Do you, Nancy?

NANCY. Why, it was—— (*Stops nonplussed.*) No, I don't believe I do. You'll have to ask your Aunt Bertha. She got up this elopement.

MRS. G. (*with a smile, motioning RITA to a seat beside her on the settee*). I think I can explain. (*NANCY sits; ALICE leans against the table.*) Your aunt overheard you two girls talking about Bobbie.

ALICE (*to RITA*). I told you, more than once, that you were talking too loudly.

MRS. G. Then came the news that young Bassett had disappeared.

RITA (*repeating*). Disappeared!

NANCY (*nodding*). Gone! Left his home and mother, naughty boy!

MRS. G. And immediately after the receipt of that news, word came from your singing teacher that you had failed to keep your appointment. You see? Rather slim material out of which to build an elopement. But your aunt—well—you know how she is?

RITA. Yes. I know. (*A thoughtful pause.*)

ALICE (*to RITA*). Why didn't you go for your lesson?

RITA. As I was in the car on my way to Signorina's, I saw a rough-looking fellow crossing the street with Bobbie

in his arms. I got off in time to see him disappear around the corner. I ran after him as far as the depot.

ALICE. I saw you.

NANCY (*who had been listening intently to the above*). Did he have a red woolen scarf about his throat?

RITA. Yes. Why do you ask?

NANCY (*ignoring the question*). And Bobbie is just a pup, isn't he? A fox terrier with a peculiar splotch on his forehead?

RITA. Yes.

NANCY (*to Mrs. G. ; excited*). It's my man and my dog !

RITA. Your dog !

ALICE. Your man !

NANCY (*as before*). Don't you see? The dog I bought and brought here this morning is Bobbie. That horrid Italian probably stole him or picked him up on the street. I'm making her a present of her own dog on her own birthday.

RITA (*incredulous and delighted*). Bobbie ! Here !

NANCY. Yes. (*Recollects.*) That is—he was here. (*To ALICE.*) Did you find him?

ALICE. No. We had just started to look for him when I heard Rita's voice.

NANCY (*running out R.*). This way, Rita.

RITA (*as she follows*). Look on the sofa in my room.

ALICE. And I thought I was rid of that dog !

(*Follows NANCY and RITA. MRS. G. is about to follow when she hears MISS K.'s voice. Enter MISS K., c., talking to SOPHIE, who follows and stands just inside the doorway. MISS K. is somewhat ashamed, and somewhat subdued and very cross.*)

MISS K. And Sophie, if any one calls, say I am indisposed.

SOPHIE. Yes, ma'am. (*Turns to go.*)

MISS K. And Sophie —

SOPHIE. Yes, ma'am.

MISS K. Bring me a cup of tea—extra strong—at once.

SOPHIE. Yes, ma'am. (*Leaves the room.*)

MRS. G. (*secretly amused*). Oh ! I thought you were on your way to Philadelphia?

MISS K. (*avoiding Mrs. G.'s eye*). I was.

MRS. G. What stopped you?

MISS K. Bobbie Bassett.

MRS. G. Bobbie Bassett! And where has he been?

MISS K. I don't know exactly. He said something about the World's Series in Philadelphia, and having sent a message to his mother that was never received—but I didn't stop to listen.

MRS. G. (*with a change of tone*). That's the trouble with you.

MISS K. Eh?

MRS. G. You never stop to listen. Bertha, I shouldn't like to tell you what I think of your conduct this morning. All this talk and publicity about nothing! If you are not ashamed of yourself—you ought to be. And the least you can do is to apologize all round.

MISS K. (*bridling*). I never apologized in my life.

MRS. G. Then it is high time you began. This might have turned out seriously. If it had, it would have been all your fault.

MISS K. All my fault! What about Rita? Where is she?

MRS. G. Here. And has explained everything satisfactorily—a very simple matter.

MISS K. It will take some explaining to satisfy me!

MRS. G. (*severely*). Bertha, if you are wise, you will let this matter drop right here.

MISS K. Where is she?

MRS. G. In there. (*Motions R.*) You might as well know it—Nancy Brower has brought her a dog for a birthday present.

MISS K. A dog! In my house — (*Starts R.*)

MRS. G. (*warningly*). Now, Bertha!

(*MISS K. stops, glares at her, but evidently gives it up.*)

MISS K. Well, I suppose she'll take it with her when she visits you. (*Enter SOPHIE, C., with cup of tea on a tray.*) To my room—stupid!

MRS. G. So you will let them come, Bertha? That's fine. I'll try to show you —

MISS K. (*protestingly*). No—not another word, Mary. I've had enough to-day.

(*Exit, L.*)

(Enter NANCY, R.)

NANCY. We've found him. He was in Rita's room. And it is really and truly Bobbie.

MRS. G. (*holding up her hand*). S-s-sh ! Miss Kent has returned.

NANCY (*disappointed*). Oh ! (*Goes to door R., which she has left open ; motions.*) Don't bring him in here. Take him back. Your aunt has returned.

(Enter ALICE.)

ALICE. Now we're going to get it !

(Enter RITA.)

RITA (*to MRS. G.*). I thought she had gone to Philadelphia. What made her change her mind ?

MRS. G. Young Bassett.

NANCY. So the other Bobbie has been found, too ?

MRS. G. Yes.

ALICE. Where is he ?

MRS. G. At present he may be expiating his love of sport. It seems that he went to Philadelphia to see the baseball games.

RITA (*nervously*). Oh, dear ! What am I going to say to Aunt Bertha ?

MRS. G. Nothing. Leave it all to me. You may keep the dog, but you'd better keep him out of your aunt's sight until you leave.

RITA }
ALICE } (*together*). Leave ! Where are we going ?

MRS. G. To my home in the West.

ALICE. But Aunt Bertha —

RITA. She'll never consent.

MRS. G. But she has already consented.

RITA. Oh, Griffin, you're a magician ! Nobody but yourself could have done it. (*Hugs her.*)

MRS. G. I think Bobbie helped.

RITA. Bobbie ! How ?

MRS. G. I'll tell you all about that—after.

ALICE. You're an angel !

(*Throws her arms about MRS. G.*)

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